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#25
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MAXX
maxxthized

THE MAXX MAXXIMIZED

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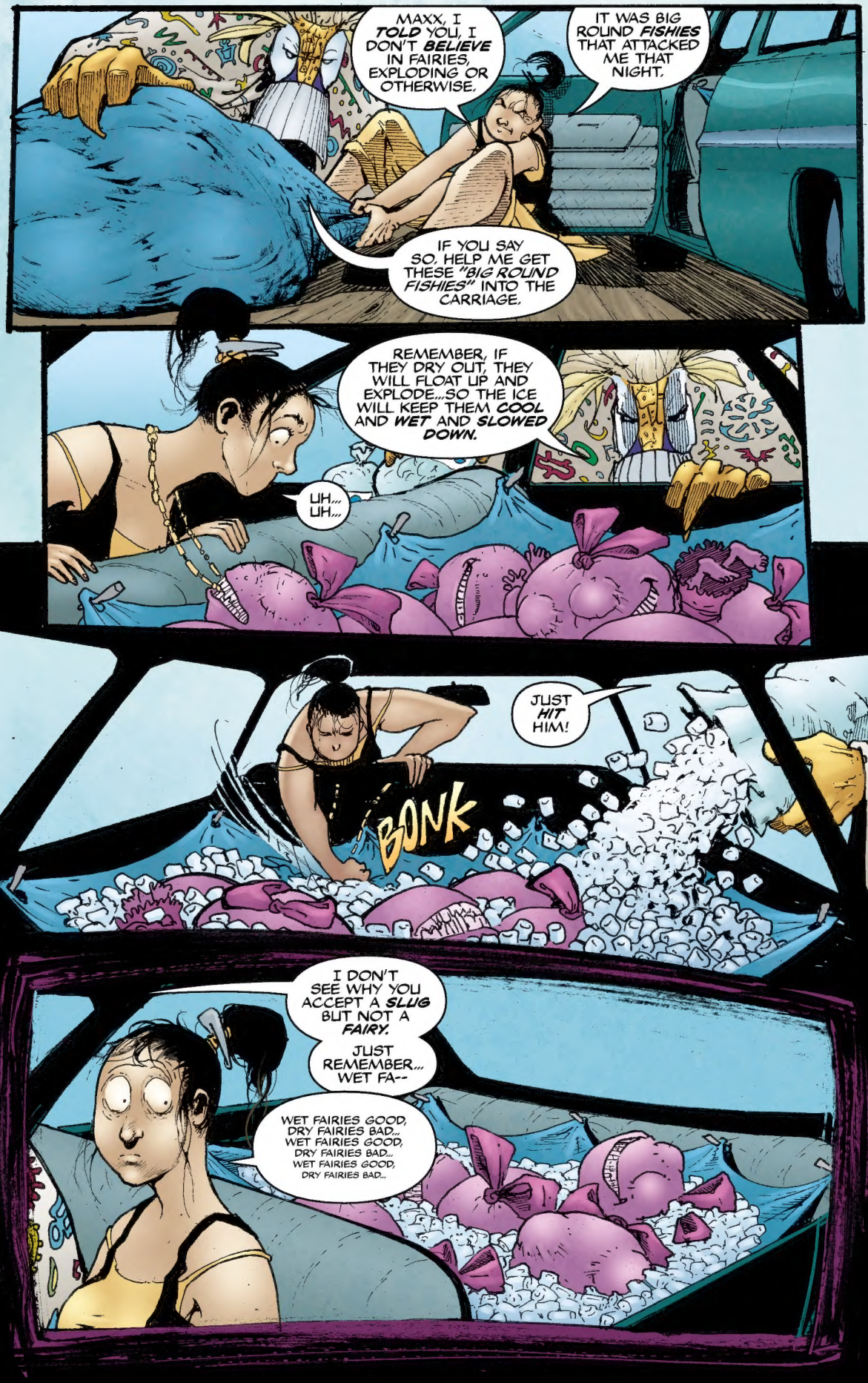
OKAY, I'VE GOT IT. CAME IN TODAY'S MAIL. SO NOW WHAT?
WE OPEN IT AND SEE WHO'S ON THE LIST. WE MUST FIND WHAT IAGO'S VICTIMS HAVE IN COMMON. SOME THREAD...
Y'KNOW, MAXX, I THOUGHT THE GENERAL IDEA OF A MASK WAS TO COVER YOUR FACE.
YOU DON'T LIKE IT? I MADE IT FROM GARBAGE, OLD JUNK, AND USED
NEVER MIND, IT'S FINE. CAN WE JUST GET ON WITH THIS?
I STILL CAN'T BELIEVE THE CRAP WE WENT THROUGH LAST WEEK TRYING TO GET THESE. IT STILL MAKES MY STOMACH QUEASY JUST THINKING ABOUT IT.
LOST AND FOUND
YOU COMPLAIN A LOT FOR A PRINCESS.
YEAH, A "PRINCESS" STANDING IN A JUNK YARD IN CUTOFFS TALKING TO A DEFORMED BUM WHO'S WEARING MY QUILT AS A CAPE.

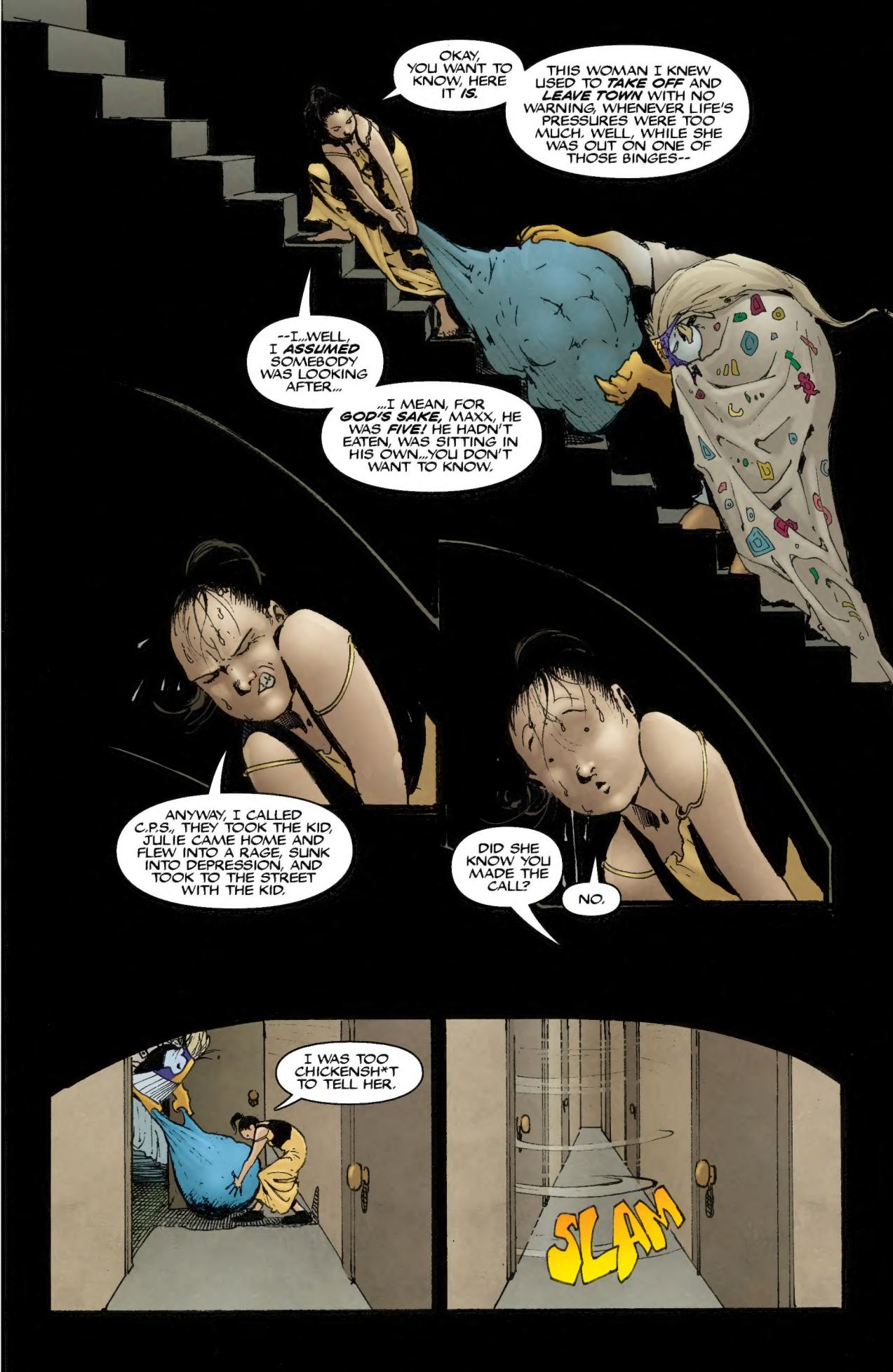
I STILL REMEMBER THE ODD LIST OF STUFF THAT YOU HAD ME GET.
OKAY, NORBERT, IT'S ALL HERE.
TWENTY BAGS OF ICE...
...A BOX OF UNCOOKED FISH...
...A 10X10 SHEET OF WATERPROOF PLASTIC...
...AND HALF A DOZEN LARGE SCREWS.
WHAT ABOUT THE SQUIRT GUNS?
THEY'RE BACK AT THE HOUSE, SO WHAT'S UP?
YOU'LL SEE! BUT FIRST, WE'LL ALSO NEED ONE OF THESE CARRIAGES.
ICE
FISH
OKAY, NOW YOU'VE GOT ME STEALING CARS. GREAT.
WE'LL BRING IT BACK.
WELL, LUCKY FOR YOU, I'M NOT THE GOODY-TWO-SHOES YOU MIGHT THINK. PICKING LOCKS IS SOMETHING I JUST HAPPEN TO BE VERY GOOD AT.
NOW LISTEN AND LEARN...
THE THING TO REMEMBER IS THAT IT TAKES A VERY DELICATE...
SRASH!
...TOUCH.

OKAY, THIS IS WHAT I *REALLY* KNOW. HOT WIRING'S CAKE.
UH... SARA...
IF WE JUST TURN THIS *SCREWDRIVER* THAT'S JAMMED INTO THE IGNITION--
OH YEAH, SURE... YOU COULD DO THAT TOO...
OKAY, I'LL SPREAD OUT THE PLASTIC! YOU SOME KIND OF EXPERT WITH THAT TOO?
YOU SPREAD IT VERY WELL.
DON'T *PUSH* IT, NORBERT.
THE SCREWS SHOULD HOLD THE PLASTIC IN PLACE. NOW WE MUST HURRY BEFORE THE ICE MELTS. GO TO THE ST. EVANS PIER.
SARA, TELL ME OF THE WOMAN YOU KNEW, WHO ALSO HAD A SPIRIT ANIMAL.
ICE
THERE'S NOT MUCH TO *TELL*. WE USED TO HANG OUT TOGETHER A LOT. THEN WE... WE STOPPED.
WHY? WHAT HAPPENED?

DID I TELL YOU HER KID SHOWED UP? GONE TOLD ME.
DO YOU BELIEVE HIM?
YEAH, I DO. WEIRD, HUH? BUT I FIGURE HE CAN'T LIE 24 HOURS A DAY. HE'S GOT TO TAKE A BREAK SOMETIME.
SO WHY DID YOU AND THIS WOMAN LOSE TOUCH? WHAT HAP--
LOOK, MAXX, JUST DROP IT, OKAY? IT'S IN THE PAST.
OKAY.
I HATE THE SMELL OF RAW FISH. I HATE WATER. JUST BEING TRAPPED UNDER THE PIER BY YOUR SLUG CLINCHED IT. THERE'S ALL SORTS OF WEIRD CRAP DOWN THERE READY TO GET YOU.
FISH
IN PANGEA, WATER IS EVERYWHERE. IT'S LIKE THE AIR HERE. YOU NEED IT TO BREATHE.
SO WHAT ARE WE CATCHING? CRABS? PIRANHAS?
GULP
SHU-GLUB
GOBBLE
GULP
YOU KNOW, SARA, IT'S WHAT IAGO WAS FEEDING THAT NIGHT HE FOUND YOU--
HH


MAXX, I TOLD YOU, I DON'T BELIEVE IN FAIRIES, EXPLODING OR OTHERWISE.
IT WAS BIG ROUND FISHIES THAT ATTACKED ME THAT NIGHT.
IF YOU SAY SO, HELP ME GET THESE "BIG ROUND FISHIES" INTO THE CARRIAGE.
REMEMBER, IF THEY DRY OUT, THEY WILL FLOAT UP AND EXPLODE...SO THE ICE WILL KEEP THEM COOL AND WET AND SLOWED DOWN.
UH... UH...
JUST HIT HIM!
BONK
I DON'T SEE WHY YOU ACCEPT A SLUG BUT NOT A FAIRY.
JUST REMEMBER... WET FA--
WET FAIRIES GOOD, DRY FAIRIES BAD... WET FAIRIES GOOD, DRY FAIRIES BAD... WET FAIRIES GOOD, DRY FAIRIES BAD...

SARA, ABOUT THAT WOMAN... IT'S NOT IN THE PAST, IF HER SON'S HERE, MAYBE YOU SHOUL--
YOU'RE BACK ON THAT? LISTEN, YOU WANT TO KNOW WHY WE'RE NO LONGER FRIENDS?
'CAUSE I LET HER DOWN, THAT'S WHY! NOW YOU KNOW! HAPPY?
EVERY TIME I THINK OF HER, ALL I CAN THINK OF IS HOW I BETRAYED HER.
YOU'RE CARRYING QUITE A LOAD.
YEAH, WELL, MAYBE I DESERVE IT.
NO, I MEAN MAYBE I SHOULD HELP YOU PULL INSTEAD OF PUSHING.
THAT'S OKAY. =GRUNT= ON STAIRS LIKE THESE I'D RATHER BE WHERE I AM INSTEAD OF WHERE YOU ARE, NO OFFENSE.
MAN, THESE... "THINGS" WEIGH A TON.
THE PRINCESS HAS A HEAVY HEART. HOW DID SHE BETRAY HER LONG-LOST FRIEND?


OKAY, YOU WANT TO KNOW, HERE IT *IS.*
THIS WOMAN I KNEW USED TO ***TAKE OFF*** AND ***LEAVE TOWN*** WITH NO WARNING, WHENEVER LIFE'S PRESSURES WERE TOO MUCH. WELL, WHILE SHE WAS OUT ON ONE OF THOSE BINGES--
--I...WELL, I ***ASSUMED*** SOMEBODY WAS LOOKING AFTER...
...I MEAN, FOR ***GOD'S SAKE,*** MAXX, HE WAS ***FIVE!*** HE HADN'T EATEN, WAS SITTING IN HIS OWN...YOU DON'T WANT TO KNOW.
ANYWAY, I CALLED C.P.S., THEY TOOK THE KID, JULIE CAME HOME AND FLEW INTO A RAGE, SUNK INTO DEPRESSION, AND TOOK TO THE STREET WITH THE KID.
DID SHE KNOW YOU MADE THE CALL?
NO.
I WAS TOO CHICKENSH*T TO TELL HER.
SLAM

HURRY, MY PRINCESS, WE MUST WORK FAST.

I WILL EXTRACT THE *DIGITS* FROM THE FAIRIES, WHILE *YOU* KEEP THEM WET WITH THE SQUIRT GUNS, OKAY?

SARA...?

SARA?!

UH...OKAY, OKAY. THIS IS SO *%&@#ING BIZARRE!* JUST GIVE ME A SEC--

WE DON'T *HAVE* A SECOND. IS THIS THE KNIFE?

YEAH.

A *BUTTER KNIFE?*

IF I'D KNOWN WE'D BE MUTILATING FAIRIES I'D'VE BOUGHT A *GINSU*, OKAY?

NOW, TELL ME AGAIN WHAT WE'RE DOING HERE, MAXX...

MOST OF THE LARGER PARTS HAVE ALREADY BEEN DIGESTED, HOPE-FULLY LEAVING-- *BINGO*. THE VICTIMS' FINGERS, TOES...

PLEASE DON'T PUKE. PLEASE.

UH... MAXX?

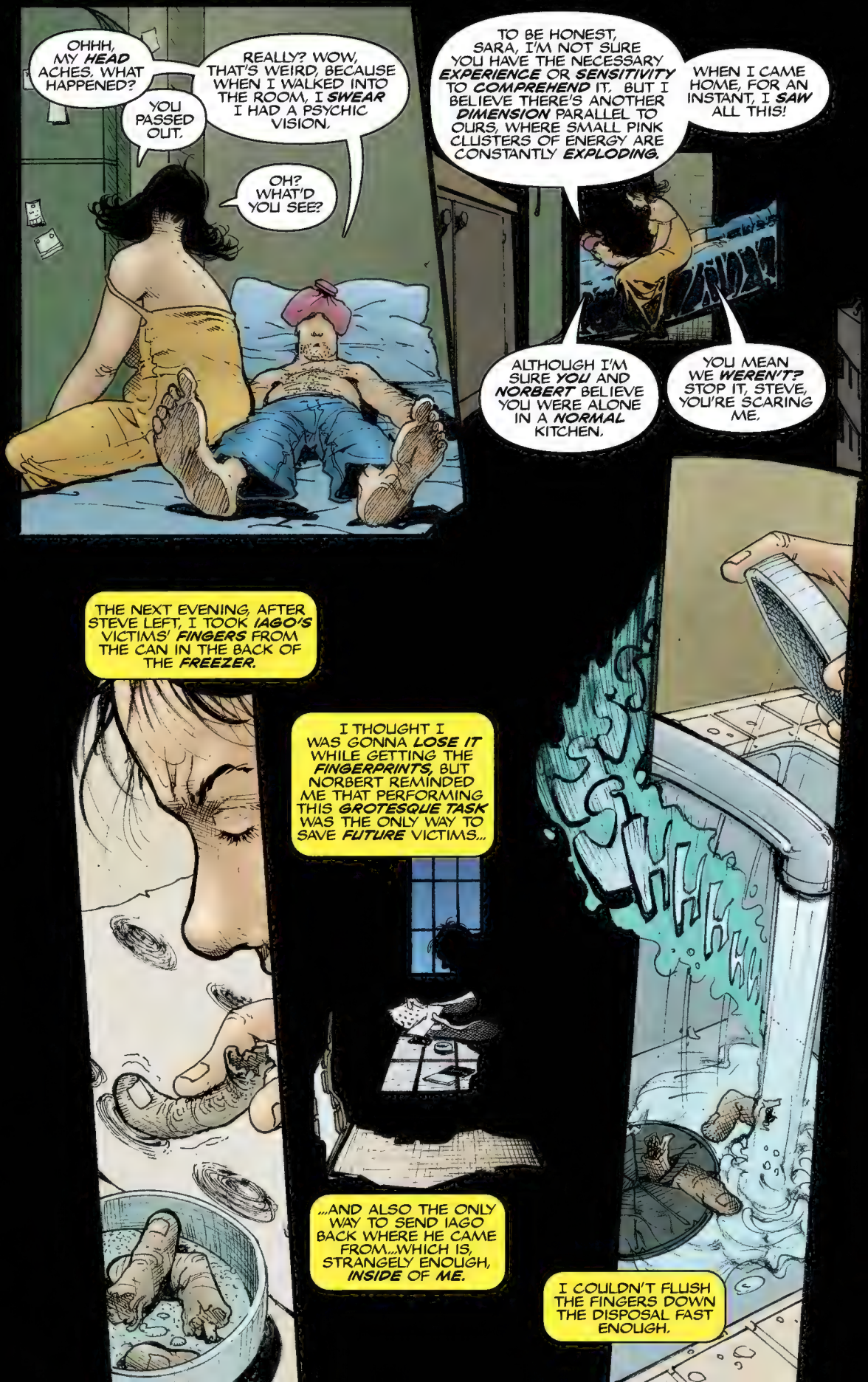
A COUPLE OF 'EM ARE GOING AWOL.

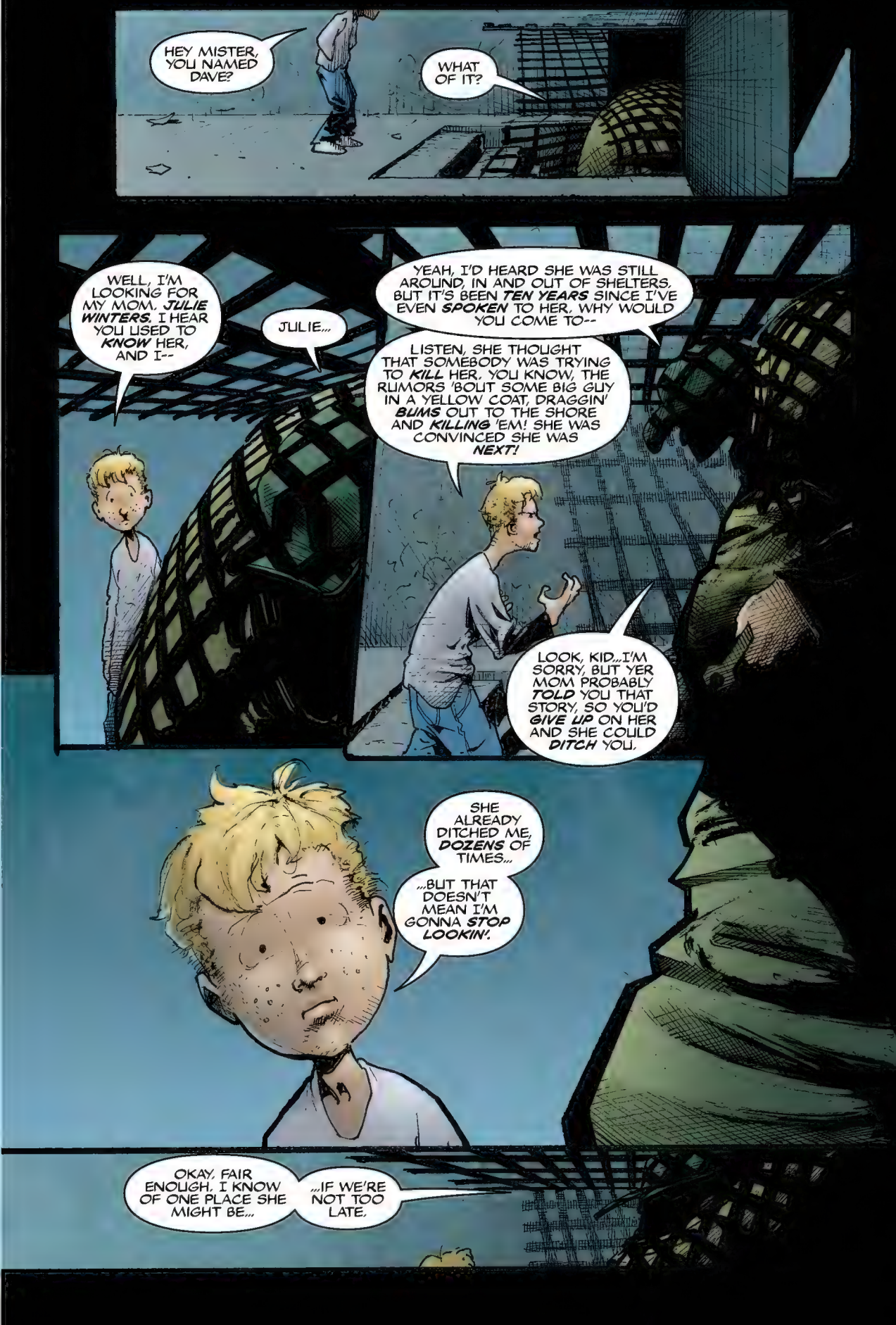
THUMP
SPLAT!
CRAP! HE BLEW UP!
PLOP
DRY FAIRIES FLOAT UP AND EXPLODE-- REMEMBER TO KEEP SQUIRTING THE OTHERS!
THEY ALL WILL, UNLESS WE CAN KEEP THEM MOIST.
SPLAT
WE'LL GET THOSE LATER. JUST KEEP SQUIRTING THESE.
RIGHT, I KEEP FORGETTING...
KEEP SQUIRTING KEEP SQUIRTING KEEP SQUIRTING
SQUIRT
SQUIRT
SQUIRT
THERE GOES THE SECOND ONE...
MAXX, WHY DON'T WE JUST LET 'EM ALL EXPLODE AND THEN COLLECT THE FINGERS?
SPLA
YOU REALLY WANT YOUR CEILING FULL OF FAIRY CARCASSES?
BESIDES, CUTTING THEM OPEN IS FAR MORE HUMANE THAN LETTING THEM ALL EXPLODE!
OOOKAAAY, WHATEVER.
BE SURE TO COLLECT--
YEAH, YEAH, I KNOW.
I'M GONNA HAVE NIGHTMARES ABOUT THIS FOR YEARS!

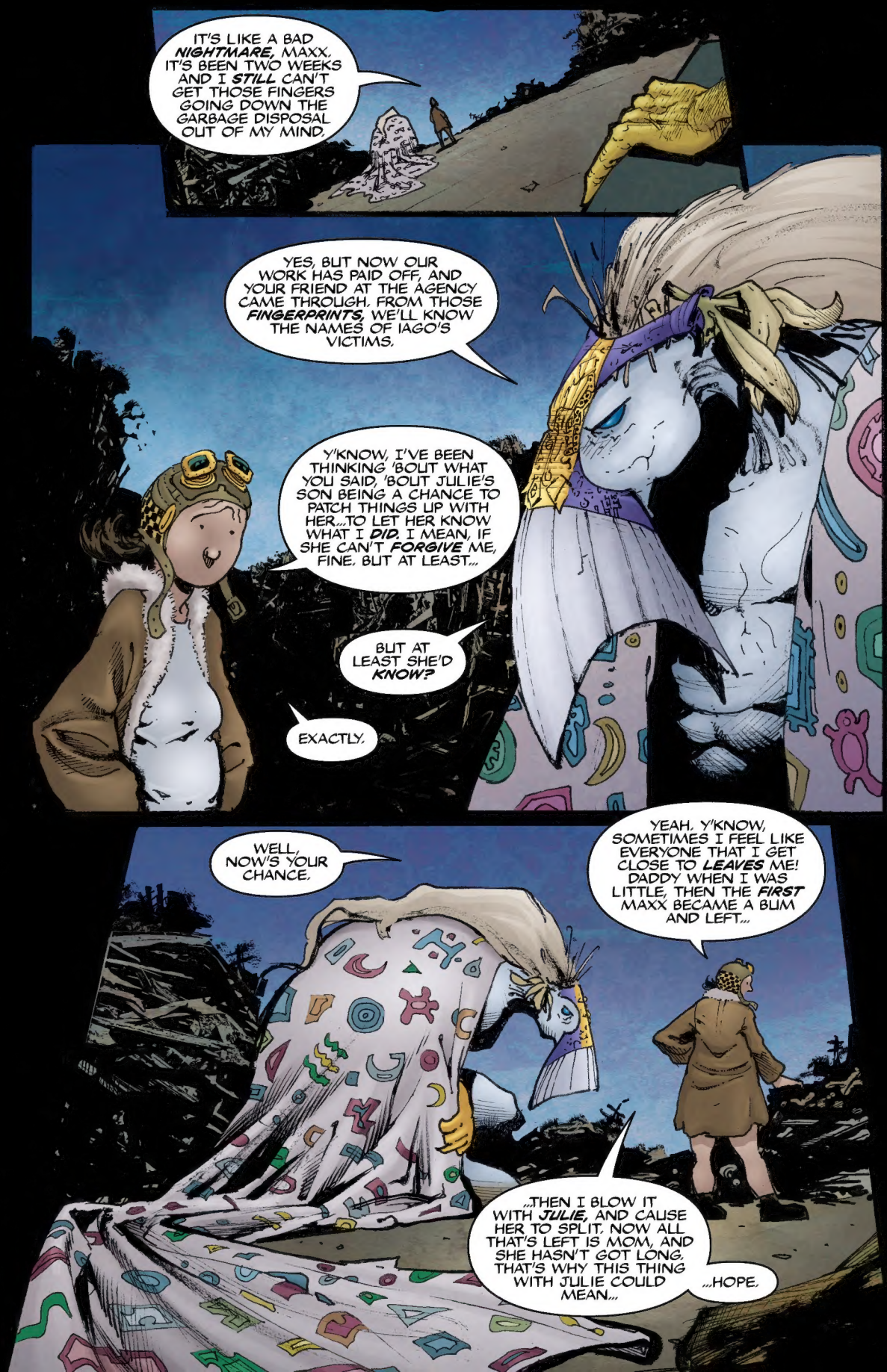
KNOCK KNOCK
SARA? IT'S ME, STEVE! IS THAT YOU?
OH MY GOD! IT'S STEVE!
QUICK, HIDE EVERYTHING!
WHERE?!
SARA, WHY'S THE DOOR LOCKED? LET ME IN!
JUST A SEC!
OH SH*T!
COMING...
IF STEVE SEES ALL THIS, HE'LL CRACK FOR SURE!
CLINC!
YOU SOUND FUNNY--YOU GOT A GUY IN THERE?
OH GOD...
IT'S OKAY, I'VE GOT A KEY HERE, SOMEWHERE...
NO, WAIT!
SARA, THEY'RE DRYING UP!
THANK GOD THEY DIDN'T ROLL UNDER THE DOOR...

SARA!
SPLAT!
...NEVER MIND.
THERE!
SO WHAT'S THE BIG...
...DEAL.

STEVE...? YOU LOOK A LITTLE...
...FAINT.
THUMP


OHHH, MY HEAD ACHES. WHAT HAPPENED?
YOU PASSED OUT.
REALLY? WOW, THAT'S WEIRD, BECAUSE WHEN I WALKED INTO THE ROOM, I SWEAR I HAD A PSYCHIC VISION.
OH? WHAT'D YOU SEE?
TO BE HONEST, SARA, I'M NOT SURE YOU HAVE THE NECESSARY EXPERIENCE OR SENSITIVITY TO COMPREHEND IT. BUT I BELIEVE THERE'S ANOTHER DIMENSION PARALLEL TO OURS, WHERE SMALL PINK CLUSTERS OF ENERGY ARE CONSTANTLY EXPLODING.
WHEN I CAME HOME, FOR AN INSTANT, I SAW ALL THIS!
ALTHOUGH I'M SURE YOU AND NORBERT BELIEVE YOU WERE ALONE IN A NORMAL KITCHEN.
YOU MEAN WE WEREN'T? STOP IT, STEVE, YOU'RE SCARING ME.
THE NEXT EVENING, AFTER STEVE LEFT, I TOOK IAGO'S VICTIMS' FINGERS FROM THE CAN IN THE BACK OF THE FREEZER.
I THOUGHT I WAS GONNA LOSE IT WHILE GETTING THE FINGERPRINTS, BUT NORBERT REMINDED ME THAT PERFORMING THIS GROTESQUE TASK WAS THE ONLY WAY TO SAVE FUTURE VICTIMS...
...AND ALSO THE ONLY WAY TO SEND IAGO BACK WHERE HE CAME FROM...WHICH IS, STRANGELY ENOUGH, INSIDE OF ME.
I COULDN'T FLUSH THE FINGERS DOWN THE DISPOSAL FAST ENOUGH.


HEY MISTER, YOU NAMED DAVE?
WHAT OF IT?
WELL, I'M LOOKING FOR MY MOM, JULIE WINTERS. I HEAR YOU USED TO KNOW HER, AND I--
JULIE...
YEAH, I'D HEARD SHE WAS STILL AROUND, IN AND OUT OF SHELTERS, BUT IT'S BEEN TEN YEARS SINCE I'VE EVEN SPOKEN TO HER. WHY WOULD YOU COME TO--
LISTEN, SHE THOUGHT THAT SOMEBODY WAS TRYING TO KILL HER, YOU KNOW, THE RUMORS 'BOUT SOME BIG GUY IN A YELLOW COAT, DRAGGIN' BUMS OUT TO THE SHORE AND KILLING 'EM! SHE WAS CONVINCED SHE WAS NEXT!
LOOK, KID...I'M SORRY, BUT YER MOM PROBABLY TOLD YOU THAT STORY, SO YOU'D GIVE UP ON HER AND SHE COULD DITCH YOU.
SHE ALREADY DITCHED ME, DOZENS OF TIMES...
...BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN I'M GONNA STOP LOOKIN'.
OKAY, FAIR ENOUGH. I KNOW OF ONE PLACE SHE MIGHT BE...
...IF WE'RE NOT TOO LATE.


IT'S LIKE A BAD NIGHTMARE, MAXX, IT'S BEEN TWO WEEKS AND I STILL CAN'T GET THOSE FINGERS GOING DOWN THE GARBAGE DISPOSAL OUT OF MY MIND.
YES, BUT NOW OUR WORK HAS PAID OFF, AND YOUR FRIEND AT THE AGENCY CAME THROUGH. FROM THOSE FINGERPRINTS, WE'LL KNOW THE NAMES OF IAGO'S VICTIMS.
Y'KNOW, I'VE BEEN THINKING 'BOUT WHAT YOU SAID, 'BOUT JULIE'S SON BEING A CHANCE TO PATCH THINGS UP WITH HER...TO LET HER KNOW WHAT I DID. I MEAN, IF SHE CAN'T FORGIVE ME, FINE, BUT AT LEAST...
BUT AT LEAST SHE'D KNOW?
EXACTLY.
WELL, NOW'S YOUR CHANCE.
YEAH, Y'KNOW, SOMETIMES I FEEL LIKE EVERYONE THAT I GET CLOSE TO LEAVES ME! DADDY WHEN I WAS LITTLE, THEN THE FIRST MAXX BECAME A BUM AND LEFT...
...THEN I BLOW IT WITH JULIE, AND CAUSE HER TO SPLIT. NOW ALL THAT'S LEFT IS MOM, AND SHE HASN'T GOT LONG. THAT'S WHY THIS THING WITH JULIE COULD MEAN...
...HOPE.

NOW, LET'S SEE THE NAMES OF ALL OF THOSE POOR SUCKERS THAT'VE BEEN FAIRY FOOD, THEN MAYBE WE--WE...
SARA? WHAT IS IT?
YOU LOOK PALE... WHAT'S WRONG?
SARA..?
VEGA, VINCENT
WOJEHIEWICZ, JOHN
WAGNER, DONNA
YEE, MICHAEL
YOUNG, NELSON
WILLIAMS, BRUCE
WINTERS, JULIA
TEDMON, CATHERINE

GRUMPLE